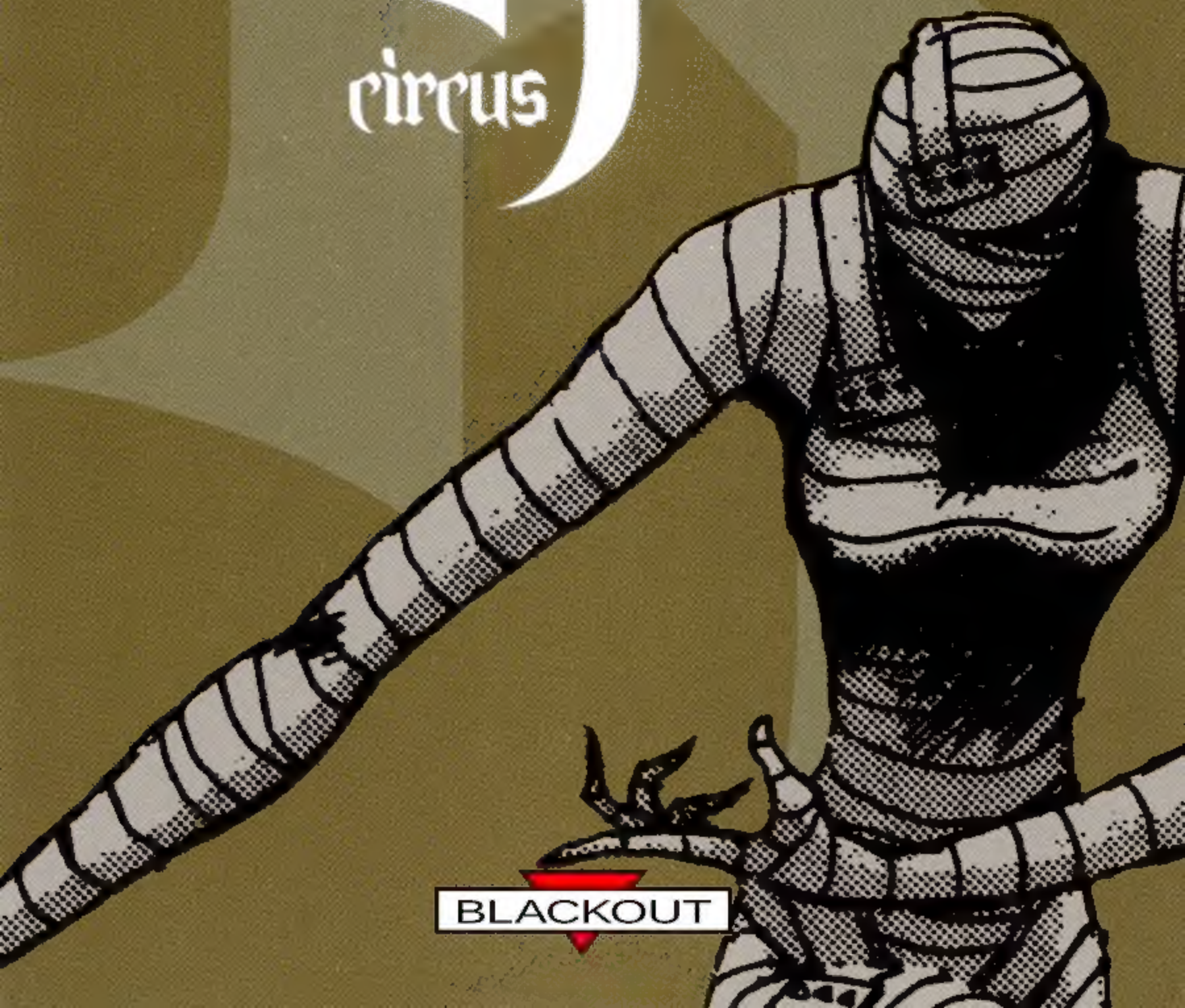
KAZUHIRO FUJITA

Karakuri circus 10



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karakuri circus

10

KAZUHIRO FUJITA

★ SUMMARY OF THE PREVIOUS VOLUMES ★

DURING HIS STAY IN PARIS, NARUMI KATO WAS NOT ABLE TO RECOVER HIS MEMORY. HAVING DECIDED TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE GUY AND LUCILLE, THE YOUNG MAN LEARNED FROM THE LATTER THE ORIGIN OF SHIROGANES AND THE HISTORY OF CONFLICTS MARKING THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN AUTOMATONS AND SHIROGANES. AS EXPECTED, HE WAS VERY SURPRISED. DURING THIS TIME, AN AUTOMATON NAMED ARLEQUINO APPEARED, AND THE THREE SHIROGANES WERE FORCED TO FIGHT A DESPERATE BATTLE AGAINST HIM. NARUMI THEN LEARNED THAT THE SOFT STONE, WHICH ALLOWS THE CREATION OF AQUA VITAE (THE ALL-POWERFUL ELIXIR THAT HEALS ALL DISEASES), IS BEING SOUGHT AFTER BY BOTH AUTOMATONS AND SHIROGANES AND IS THE REAL CAUSE OF THE CONFLICTS BETWEEN THEM.
IN ORDER TO FIND THIS STONE, WHICH IS THE KEY TO THIS STORY, NARUMI AND HIS COMPANIONS HAVE ARRIVED IN THE PRINCIPALITY OF LOHENSTEIN WITH ONLY A SENTENCE FOR A CLUE: "THE SOFT STONE IS WITH THE ONE WITH A GOOD SMILE".
A NEW FIGHT AWAITS THEM AS THEY TRY TO SAVE PRINCESS ELISE, WHO HAS BEEN ABDUCTED BY AUTOMATONS...

ACT IX (CONTINUED)

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ACT VIII : KARAKURI *
THE PRINCESS OF THE AUTOMATONS
"BARON GÜNTHER"

WE'RE GONNA CRAAASH !!!

GOOOH

FIND THEIR DROP POINT!

DAMMIT! WE HAD ORDERS TO BRING HER BACK ALIVE!

TANTA

WHAT WAS THAT?!

VOM

IN HAMLET, SHAKE-SPEARE SAYS...

CLAP

...THAT WICKEDNESS HAS NO HOLD ON THE SIMPLE-MINDED!

NARUMI!

GUY?!

IT WASN'T WORTH IT TO COME...

...SAVE ME...

ANYWAY, LET'S LAND.

WEIRD...

FLAP FLAP

SAH...

HUH? WHAT?

FIRST OFF, LET'S INFORM OUR EMPLOYER.

WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO?

AP'TCHA... ARE THOSE THE SHIROGANES YOU TOLD US ABOUT?!

AN EXTREMELY STRONG MAN... AND A FLYING PUPPET...

DA DA DA DA

AH...

THAT DREAM AGAIN ...

WHAT GOES ON IN THAT HEAD OF YOURS?!

REALLY, NARUMI!

YOU HAD TO GO HEAD TO HEAD WITH THAT WEIRD AUTOMATON, WHICH ONLY MADE THE SITUATION WORSE!

BUT...

I COULD HAVE EASILY DESTROYED THEM WITH OLYMPIA!

WHEN THE PRINCESS WAS ABDUCTED IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS CORNER OUR ENEMIES.

BAH... UH...

MY PLAN WASN'T PERFECT ... BUT...

UH... YES... LET'S SAY...

IF OLYMPIA HADN'T BEEN THERE IN TIME, YOU'D BOTH BE DEAD!

THEN YOU JUMP OUT, WITHOUT THINKING!

IF THE PRINCESS HAD BEEN INJURED, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE, HUH?!

AND AFTERWARD, THAT WHOLE BUSINESS IN THE HELI-COPTER!

KAAAAA

VLAAP

IF SHE DIED, WE COULD HAVE LOST THE STONE FOREVER!!!

LET ME REMIND YOU THAT WE THINK THE PRINCESS IS THE CONTAINER FOR THE SOFT STONE!!!

"NOT PERFECT"?! YOU CHEEKY BASTARD !!!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

IT'S REALLY RARE TO MEET SOMEONE WHO CAN ANGER SHIROGANES SO MUCH, SINCE THEY'RE WELL-KNOWN FOR THEIR SELF-CONTROL...

YES! I'M SOWWWY! I SUUUCKED !!!

YOU'RE AWAKE!

EN-CHANTED, PRINCESS...

...IN MY BODY?

A "SOFT STONE"...

LEAVE ME BE.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?! I'M SORRY FOR ALL THAT HAPPENED...

WHAT IS YOUR PART IN THIS AFFAIR?

WHO ARE YOU?

WHAT IS A SOFT STONE?

I WAS ASKING THESE TWO PERSONS.

AH...

NARUMI .. YOUR PRESENCE WILL PROBABLY DISTURB OUR EXPLANATIONS. CAN YOU GO OUTSIDE FOR A WHILE, PLEASE?

...TO ANSWER IT ALL POINT BY POINT.

YOUR HIGHNESS, ALLOW US...

YOU ARE... NARUMI?

I WILL TELL YOU FRANKLY.

WHATEVER... ANYWAY, WE'RE NOT THE SAME, YOU AND I!

PFFFT! YOU'RE THROWING ME OUT?!

I HAVE NO GRATITUDE TO ANYONE JUST BECAUSE I AM STILL ALIVE!

SO

I NEVER WANTED TO TURN EIGHTEEN!

...

YOU MEAN... YOU'D HAVE PREFERRED TO DIE?

.. FOR ALL THAT WASTED EFFORT!

BUT... THANK YOU ANYWAY...

HI HI

GUY, LUCILLE... IF THAT SENTENCE, "THE SOFT STONE IS WITH THE ONE WITH A GOOD SMILE", IS TRUE...

Rub Rub

I SEE...

YES.

TAH

...IS AS FAKE AS A MANNEQUIN'S!

HER SMILE...

...YOU'RE NOT GONNA FIND THAT STONE IN THE BODY OF THIS PRINCESS.

...

BUT...

CLAC!

NOW, I WILL EXPLAIN EVERY-THING...

NARUMI!

AH... IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?

I HEARD THAT YOUR LADY FRIEND WAS SICK?

SHIT SHIT SHIT! WHAT A STUCK-UP BIMBO, THAT PRINCESS !!!

HE LIVES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN... IT'S A BIT FAR, BUT...

IT'S NO PROBLEM! DO YOU WANT MY SON TO GO GET A DOCTOR?

I SINCERELY THANK YOU FOR LENDING US A ROOM FOR HER!

...WE DON'T HAVE OUR OWN DOCTOR.

...IN A TOWN AS SMALL AS OURS...

WE SPEND TOO MUCH MONEY ON DEVELOPING HIGH-TECH COMPANIES... OUR PRINCE DOESN'T SUBSIDIZE CITY DOCTORS ANYMORE.

VLONG

YOU'RE JAPANESE, RIGHT? ACTUALLY, I THINK OUR COUNTRY IS BECOMING LIKE YOURS.

WOW! I DIDN'T THINK THIS KIND OF STUFF COULD HAPPEN IN SUCH A RICH COUNTRY!!!

YOU KNOW, I'M PRETTY GOOD AT MANUAL LABOR...

LEAVE IT! I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT!

GOH

GOTTA MOVE THIS OVER THERE?

OUR FRIEND ISN'T IN SUCH BAD SHAPE. NO NEED TO CALL A DOCTOR.

In Japan, we call this game "otedama"

DON'T BOTHER THE MAN, FRANCIS!

WOW! FOUR BOXES AT ONCE?! AWESOME!

Hop

THIS STORY IS SO INCREDIBLE THAT I HAVE A HARD TIME BELIEVING IT...

SO YOU BELIEVE THAT THIS "SOFT STONE" MAY BE INSIDE ME?!

...AND THAT'S THE WHOLE STORY, YOUR HIGHNESS.

MY UNCLE, BARON GUNTHER, WHO IS MY FATHER'S OLDER BROTHER, HAD TO GIVE UP THE THRONE... HE WAS MUCH TOO SICK TO SHOULDER ALL THE RESPONSIBILITIES INHERENT TO A MONARCH'S POSITION.

SINCE AUTOMATONS WERE THERE, VERY MUCH SO.

AND THESE RECENT EVENTS ARE RELATED TO THAT?

AND YOU ARE SAYING THAT FROM THIS STONE, IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO MAKE "AQUA VITAE", AN ELIXIR THAT CAN CURE ALL DISEASES?!

YES, THAT'S RIGHT.

THAT IS WHY I TRULY BELIEVE THAT I WAS KIDNAPPED ON THE BARON'S ORDERS...

HE'S EVEN STARTED TO TARGET ME IN THE LAST FEW YEARS.

UNFORTU-NATELY, HE COULD NEVER GET PAST IT AND NOW BEARS A GRUDGE AGAINST MY FATHER.

...

PLEASE BE REASSURED, I AM A DOCTOR.

YOUR HIGHNESS, WOULD YOU ALLOW US TO EXAMINE YOUR BODY?

SAH...

VERY WELL... YOU ONLY NEED TO UNDRESS NOW.

I DO NOT FEEL THIS STONE INSIDE ME,

BUT I'LL ALLOW YOU.

SO BE IT.

DO NOT WORRY .. SHIROGANES DO NOT HAVE ANY KIND OF FEELINGS.

FLAP

SAH

CLIP

AFTER WHICH YOU CAN CONTINUE LIVING AS BEFORE, WITHOUT ANY SIDE EFFECT.

WE CAN EXTRACT IT WITH A VERY MINOR SURGERY,

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

IF YOU FIND THE STONE IN MY BODY...

IS HE ALSO A "SHIROGANE"?

THAT MAN .. WHO SAVED ME...

YES.

YOU TOLD ME THAT YOU WERE TRAVELING AND DESTROYING AUTOMATONS.

..."AS BEFORE" ?!

THAT MAN IS THE SHAME OF SHIROGANES!

IT'S THE TRUTH!

HE IS JUST A HAPLESS IDIOT, YOUR HIGHNESS!

AH, NO!

...IS AS FAKE AS A MANNE-QUIN'S!

HER SMILE

HHH

HHH

BAINES

YOU'VE ...

FAILED ?!

WWWHHH

FHH

FHH

I GATHERED MEN...

.. AND PREPARED A HELI-COPTER ...

FHH

.. BARON GÜNTHER

YES, SIR...

MY DEEPEST APOLO-GIES ...

FHH

AND AFTER ALL THAT, YOU FAILED?! YOU COULDN'T KIDNAP ELISE?!

...COUGH-HACK-

DESPITE YOUR PRESENCE, HE STILL FAILED HIS MISSION.

BUT AP'TCHA..

DON'T GET UPSET, BARON...

I'LL TAKE THE REMEDY HIDDEN INSIDE ELISE'S BODY...

...AND RESTORE YOUR HEALTH.

AP'TCHA ...

DON'T WORRY, I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.

HE HE

THANK YOU .. AP'TCHA...

BLACKOUT

ACT VIII : KARAKURI *
THE PRINCESS OF THE AUTOMATONS
"A PRINCESS'S PUNCH"

THERE YOU GO! THAT'S THE LAST ONE!

NARUMI...

THANKS.

HERE, HAVE A DRINK!

NICE GOING, MAN! THANKS TO YOU, I WAS ABLE TO CLEAN EVERYTHING UP QUICKLY!

...GUY?! YOU'RE DONE ALREADY?!

SHE LOOKS LIKE A SIMPLE VILLAGE GIRL.

IF PEOPLE HEARD THAT THE PRINCESS WAS SIMPLY WALKING AROUND TOWN,

THAT WOULD COMPLICATE THINGS FOR US...

NO.

SO? DID YOU FIND THE SOFT STONE IN HER BODY?

...THERE IS NO SOFT STONE IN HER BODY!

IN CONCLUSION ...

WE EXAMINED HER BODY, ANALYZED HER BLOOD AND CHECKED AQUA VITAE LEVELS IN HER BREATH... EVERYTHING WAS NORMAL.

GUY AND I WILL THINK ABOUT IT.

THE AUTOMATONS CERTAINLY ATTACKED HER THINKING THAT THE STONE WAS IN HER BODY.

WE CAN'T REALLY WRITE "NO STONE HERE" ON HER FOREHEAD!

SO... WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

FOR NOW, PLEASE DO NOT TELL MY FATHER ANYTHING.

HM...

CRAP!

I DON'T LIKE GIRLS LIKE THAT !!!

HUH ?!

HER HIGHNESS WAS VERY CLEAR. I BELIEVE IT'S A DIRECT ORDER... YOU WILL HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF HER!

... WHAT?! BUT...

GO!

I WOULD LIKE TO STAY HERE A LITTLE LONGER.

TAH

I'LL ALLOW YOU TO CALL ME ELISE.

BAH... SO...

DON'T CALL ME PRINCESS HERE.

... HEY!

PRINCESS, WHY DON'T YOU WANT US TO INFORM YOUR FATHER?!

OK, WHATEVER ...

HE'S NOT KING, BUT "PRINCE CONSORT"!

FINE... ELISE, THE KING IS GONNA WORRY IF YOU DON'T TELL HIM WHERE YOU ARE!

"I'LL ALLOW YOU"?!

YOU SAVED ME ONCE! YOU WILL JUST HAVE TO DO IT AGAIN!

IT'S DANGEROUS! SOME BAD PEOPLE MIGHT TRY TO HURT YOU! YOU'VE GOTTA GO BACK QUICKLY!

BECAUSE OF THAT, I WOULD LIKE A LITTLE FREEDOM AND TIME BY MYSELF.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE BEEN OUT ALONE...

GRRGRR

GRRR... YOU LITTLE ...

DO NOT WORRY... EVEN IF YOU CANNOT, I WON'T HOLD A GRUDGE AGAINST YOU!

HEY! IT'S FRANCIS!

?

QUICK! HIDE!

THEY SAW US!

BAH... THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAID THAT WE HAD SOMEONE WHO LOOKED LIKE THE PRINCESS AT HOME!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

AND WITH A WEIRD-LOOKING ASIAN!

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! OUR PRINCESS CAN'T BE WALKING AROUND IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD LIKE THAT!

YOU SEE?! I TOLD YOU, FRANCIS!

WELL... I DON'T THINK... THAT YOU'RE THE REAL PRINCESS.

SO? WHAT DO YOU THINK?

BECAUSE... YOU'RE MUCH PRETTIER!

HOW CAN YOU TELL?

YOU'RE RIGHT...

LOOK! THAT'S NOT HER AT ALL!

HE HE

"Weird-looking"?!

HI HI

BUT... SHE LOOKS LIKE A DOLL.

SHE DOESN'T LAUGH LIKE YOU.

THE PRINCESS IS PRETTY TOO...

...AH?

SAY, DO YOU KNOW OF A BARBER AROUND HERE?

IT'S TRUE...

YES...

HE HE HE! WHY ARE YOU BLUSHING, FRANCIS?!

I'VE NEVER SEEN MR. SCHWARTZ SO NERVOUS...

WHY IS SHE DOING THAT?

YES!

...MISS! ARE YOU SURE?! YOU REALLY WANNA CUT THEM?

UH... YES.

ARE YOU JAPANESE, MISTER?

THAT'S HEAVY!

OOF...

VLOM

VLOM

I'M NOT AGAINST THAT KIND OF STEREOTYPE, BUT...

SO YOU GOTTA BE STRONG IN KARATE, RIGHT? ALL JAPANESE DO EITHER KARATE OR JUDO!

When I was a kid, I thought every French person wore a beret and walked around with a French baguette under the arm.

AT LEAST, THEY HAVE THE SAME ORIGIN...

IT'S TRUE THAT KUNG-FU KINDA RESEMBLES KARATE...

I'D LIKE TO LEARN TO USE IT FOR REAL!

SOMEONE GAVE IT TO MY DAD.

IT'S A SANDBAG!

SHOW US HOW TO DO IT!

...THEN, KEEP YOUR BODY STRAIGHT... AND...

BLA BLA

I WAS REALLY HAPPY TO BE ABLE TO STYLE SUCH A PRETTY YOUNG LADY! I'LL KEEP THE MEMORY UNTIL I DIE... THANK YOU!

THERE ARE MORE AND MORE PEOPLE WATCHING US...

HE'S REALLY JAPANESE!

AWE-SOME!

OOOHH!

BAM

PLEASE TEACH ME TO PUNCH.

MY TURN NOW.

HM?

HA HA! THAT'S BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T ALIGNING YOUR ARM AND YOUR FIST...

I HAVE OFTEN PUNCHED MY PILLOWS... BUT I HAVE ALMOST ALWAYS ENDED UP HURTING MY HAND!

YOU KNOW... A GIRL LIKE YOU DOESN'T NEED TO KNOW HOW TO PUNCH...

YOU'RE DONE GETTING YOUR HAIRCUT?

WOW...

HEUM

WHAT A DIFFER-ENCE!

...WHEN THINGS DON'T GO THE WAY I WANT, I GET ANGRY.

ME TOO...

I SEE...

...

TO PUNCH, YOU'VE GOTTA MAKE YOUR FIST STARTING FROM THE LAST FINGER...

YES...

SHOW ME.

THE BACK OF YOUR HAND HAS TO BE ALIGNED WITH YOUR ARM, OR ELSE YOU'LL HURT YOURSELF...

...CAN'T BE ALL THAT EASY.

BEING A PRINCESS...

YES!

YOUR TURN NOW... GIVE IT A TRY!

NOT AT ALL!

DON'T YOU THINK SHE LOOKS LIKE PRINCESS ELISE?

DID YOU SEE THAT PRETTY GIRL THERE?

I THINK YOU'RE RATHER GIFTED.

ME?

OOOH!!

AH? IS THAT RIGHT?

NOT BAD! THAT WAS A GOOD SOUND!

I'M SO HAPPY!

AH...

THANK YOU!

I SELL ICE CREAM OVER THERE. LET ME OFFER YOU ONE!

HERE, IT'S NOT EVERY DAY WE SEE A NICE GIRL LIKE YOU!

HER HIGHNESS ALWAYS LOOKS SO MUCH COLDER.

THIS GIRL LOOKS NICE.

NAH, CAN'T BE THE PRINCESS!

BLA

BLA

BLA

THANK YOU VERY MUCH...

HE! HEEE!

Girls have to be strong, too!

THIS IS GOOD...

SLURP

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME ANYONE HAS SAID THAT TO ME.

"A NICE GIRL"...

IF YOU WERE DEAD, YOU WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO LEARN ALL THESE NEW SENSATIONS ...

CRUNCH

IT'S ALL RIGHT ...

YOU RISKED YOUR LIFE TO SAVE ME.

...SORRY.

I AM...

NO.

ON THE CONTRARY... YOU WERE CORRECT.

CAN'T BE EASY BE'N' A PRINCESS EVERY DAY.

SORRY I TOLD YOU YOU LOOKED LIKE A MANNEQUIN.

I WAS WRONG.

BUT EVEN A PRINCESS LIVES IN THE SAME TIME AS OTHER YOUNG WOMEN. WHEN I SEE OTHER WOMEN LEADING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT LIVES FROM MINE ON TV... I FEEL A BURNING DESIRE TO LIVE LIKE THEY DO!

HM, I SEE... ACTUALLY, I ALWAYS THOUGHT A PRINCESS'S LIFE WOULD BE SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

I WAS BROUGHT UP LIKE A PUPPET, AND I HAD TO ASSUME ALL THE DUTIES INCUMBENT TO THE DAUGHTER OF A PRINCE.

I NEVER HAD THE RIGHT TO DISAGREE WITH MY FATHER OR TO EXPRESS MY TRUE FEELINGS... WITHOUT REALIZING IT, I STOPPED THINKING ON MY OWN.

AH?

...INVENTED BY A BARON.

...A STRANGE EVENT...

A LONG TIME AGO, I WITNESSED...

I WAS THERE WITH MY FATHER... I WAS TEN.

MY STRANGE PRINCESS EDUCATION HAD STARTED.

HE HAD DECIDED TO BURN...

...ALL THE MANNEQUINS HE WAS NOT USING ANYMORE. PEOPLE WERE DRINK NG AND DANCING AROUND THEM.

...LIKE ONE OF THOSE MANNEQUINS THAT WERE BURNING.

I SAW MYSELF BEING FED ALL THIS INFORMATION AGAIN AND AGAIN...

I WAS TAUGHT THE TRADITIONS, HISTORY AND ECONOMY OF MY COUNTRY, HOW TO GOVERN IT, THE PROPER ETIQUETTE FOR A PRINCESS, THE TRADITIONAL DANCES AND A NUMBER OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES...

...I WOULD FINALLY NO LONGER BE THE DAUGHTER OF A PRINCE... JUST A PILE OF ASHES.

...WOULD START BURNING, WITHOUT A NOISE...

...HOPING THAT ONE DAY, ALL THOSE THINGS..

I THOUGHT I WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO ESCAPE FROM THIS LIFE...

SO I KEPT ALL MY FEELINGS BOTTLED UP DEEP INSIDE MYSELF...

AT THAT TIME...

...AND THAT IT.. WOULD BURN ME AS WELL!

WHY DIDN'T I...

...HAVE THAT DARN STONE IN MY BODY?!

IT'S TOO SILLY!

GUY SAID THAT AFTER EXTRACTING THE STONE FROM YOUR BODY, YOU COULD HAVE LIVED JUST LIKE BEFORE.

...A NEW LIFE COULD HAVE STARTED FOR ME, COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT MY FATHER HAD IN MIND.

IF YOU HAD FOUND IT...

YOU KNOW... A WHILE AGO, I THOUGHT YOU WERE REALLY THE WORST LITTLE PEST...

...HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?!

BUT I DID NOT WANT TO! I WOULD HAVE LOVED TO JOIN YOU! IT WOULD BE SO MUCH FUN!!!

AND... DID YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND?

OH!

YES! NOW, YOU'RE THE CUTEST SHORT-HAIRED LITTLE PEST I KNOW!!!

I TOLD YOU I DID NOT WANT TO GO BACK AT PRESENT!

ARE YOU READY?

PRINCESS ELISE...

...GUY?

UNFORTUNATELY, WE CANNOT...

ALL SHE WANTS IS A LITTLE REST! WE COULD'VE JUST KEPT HER WITH US UNTIL TOMORROW!!!

GUY!

HIGH-NESS!

!!

ALL I SEE IS THAT SHIROGANES REALLY HAVE NO HEART!

TAN TAN

SHIROGANES DO NOT PLAY BABYSITTER... EVEN FOR A PRINCESS!

DON'T MIS-UNDERSTAND, NARUMI...

COME, YOUR HIGHNESS !

NO! LET ME GO!

NARUMI !!!

BLACKOUT

THIS WAY, PLEASE.

YOU'RE HURTING ME!

LET GO OF ME!

NARUMI!

COME, HIGHNESS! THE PRINCE IS TERRIBLY WORRIED!

ACT VIII : KARAKURI
THE PRINCESS OF THE AUTOMATONS

"THE AUTOMATON PRINCESS"

AAH

LEAVE THEM, NARUMI.

WHERE ARE YOUR MANNERS ?!

HEY, GUYS! AT LEAST GIVE HER TIME TO SAY GOODBYE!

ZON

...

GRR...

IT'S BETTER FOR THINGS TO HAPPEN LIKE THIS, FOR THE PRINCESS'S SAKE.

YES.

WE TRUST IN THE SHIROGANES' NATURAL DISCRETION TO KEEP THIS MATTER QUIET... I HOPE YOU WILL KEEP THIS STORY TO YOURSELVES.

WE THANK YOU FOR SAVING THE PRINCESS.

NARUMI! I...

CLAC

VRROMM

VLAM

A SHIRO-GANE... WITH A HUMAN.

HM?

WHAT USE WOULD IT BE?

WE WERE BECOMING GOOD FRIENDS!

SHOOT!

PFFT...

HAH! I DON'T AGREE AT ALL!

IT'S USELESS!

TAP

YOU FORCED ME TO LEAVE WITHOUT EVEN GIVING ME A CHANCE TO THANK THEM PROPERLY!

I REMIND YOU THAT THESE PEOPLE SAVED MY LIFE!

I SHALL REPORT YOUR BEHAVIOR TO YOUR SUPERIORS!

WHY ARE SECURITY GUARDS ALWAYS THIS RUDE?

VROOM

ANSWER ME!!!

GOOHH

WHY ARE YOU LOWERING THE CURTAIN?

DJ!!!

CLIC CLIC CLIC...

ASKED US TO ABDUCT YOU.

MS. AP'TCHA..

YOUR... NECK...

?!

OOHH

CLAC

EXACTLY.

YOU'RE... KIDNAPPING ME?

.. WHO ARE YOU?!

WHAT?! BUT...

VLAN

YOU LOOK DISAPPOINTED, PRINCESS...

VRROMM...

WELL, WELL... YOU'RE DEFENDING HER, NOW?!

SHE WANTED TO FORGET THAT SHE WAS A PRINCESS FOR JUST A WHILE...

ELISE..

JUST WANTED TO REST A LITTLE.

IT'S TRUE. BUT I DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING OF HER LIFE.

NOW, I KNOW MUCH MORE.

AT THE BEGINNING, YOU HATED HER BECAUSE SHE DID NOT CHERISH HER LIFE...

.. RIGHT?

"SO I KEPT ALL MY FEELINGS BOTTLED UP INSIDE OF ME."

"I TOLD MYSELF THAT I WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO ESCAPE FROM THIS LIFE..."

YES, I'M ATTACHED TO HER! SO WHAT?! I WAS PLANNING TO CHEER HER UP, EVEN IF I DIDN'T ALWAYS FEEL LIKE I WAS UP TO THE TASK!

AND BECAUSE OF THAT, YOU GOT ATTACHED TO HER?!

YOU ARE SO WEAK, NARUMI.

I COULD FEEL THE PRESSURE SHE FELT AS A PRINCESS.

I THINK I'M GETTING IT NOW! YOU SHIROGANES HAVE BLOCKS OF ICE FOR HEARTS! SO YOU'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND OTHER PEOPLE'S FEELINGS!!!

BUT I DIDN'T EVEN GET A CHANCE!!! YOU CONTACTED HER DAD RIGHT AWAY AND SHE WAS GONE BEFORE I EVEN HAD THE TIME TO TAKE A BREATH!!!

YOU ARE CORRECT, NARUMI.

YOU JUST KEEP YOUR HATRED FOR AUTOMATONS ...

...WHILE LOSING YOUR HUMAN IDENTITY!

IT IS USELESS FOR US TO NURTURE BONDS WITH HUMANS!

THUS...

HUMANS AND SHIROGANES HAVE VERY DIFFERENT GOALS... WHAT COULD WE DO FOR THEM?

OUR ONLY REASON FOR BEING IS THE DESTRUCTION OF AUTO-MATONS.

PEOPLE LIVE, TRYING TO BE HAPPY,

BUT WE SHIROGANES ARE DIFFERENT.

NARUMI.

SHIROGANES ARE "ILLUSORY" BEINGS.

IT IS USELESS FOR US TO TRY TO LEAVE EVEN A FOOTPRINT ON A HUMAN LIFE.

BY THE WAY, WHAT DID YOU REALLY WANT WITH THE LITTLE PRINCESS?

IF ONE DAY AQUA VITAE FLOWS FREELY IN YOUR WHOLE BODY, YOU WILL UNDERSTAND.

OH? REALLY?

I DON'T UNDER-STAND.

I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE THEN ...

BY THE WAY, WHERE'S GUY?

HM...

MAYBE IT'S BETTER THAT WAY...

HUH?! WHAT?! BUT... UH...

HA HA HA!

...

HE WILL BE BACK SOON.

WWHHH

ZAN

ZON

CLAC

TOK

I KNEW YOU STILL HELD A GRUDGE AGAINST MY FATHER.

AH... YOU KNEW?

I HAD A FEELING IT WAS YOU, BARON.

YOU ARE WITH US, ELISE.

FINALLY!

TAN

I DO NOT CONSIDER A PERSON WHO CANNOT FACE MY FATHER EXCEPT BY COMMITTING CRIMES MY UNCLE!

WHAT IS IT? WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE, I OFTEN HELD YOU IN MY ARMS.

DO NOT TOUCH ME!!!

HOW SMART OF YOU!

SPAF

SHUT UP, LITTLE RUNT!

HNN

YOU HAD TO LEAVE THE THRONE TO MY FATHER BECAUSE OF YOUR WEAK CONSTITUTION...

BUT YOU ARE A BARON... AND YOU DARE HIT A DEFENSELESS YOUNG GIRL!

HEUH

HOW SHAMEFUL...

HEUH

BUT IF YOU STILL HAVE AN OUNCE OF HONOR... DO NOT HAVE IT DONE BY THIS MONSTER.

IF YOU WANT TO KILL ME TO TAKE REVENGE ON MY FATHER, FEEL FREE TO DO SO...

SHUT UP! WHO SAID I WANTED TO KILL YOU?

I DO RESENT YOUR FATHER, BUT FOR ANOTHER REASON!

AT LEAST HAVE THE COURAGE TO DO IT YOURSELF!

OR MORE EXACTLY, THIS "SOFT STONE" WITH WHICH I WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE AN ALL-POWERFUL MEDICINE!

...

ELISE!

I WANT THE MEDICINE INSIDE OF YOU!

THE CURE...

LOOK AT MY BODY!

IF I HADN'T BEEN SO FRAGILE, I WOULD HAVE BEEN THE SOVEREIGN OF THIS COUNTRY!

VLAP!

YOU KNOW ...

IT'S AP'TCHA WHO TOLD ME THAT STONE WAS IN YOUR BODY.

ZAM

AND THE OTHER AUTOMATONS WHO FOLLOW HER ARE HER OWN CREATIONS. SHE'S A REAL GENIUS!

HA HA HA! ARE YOU SURPRISED?! AP'TCHA IS A PUPPET WHO MOVES ON HER OWN!

MY NAME IS AP'TCHA.

THIS IS THE SECOND TIME WE MEET, HIGHNESS.

AND SHE TOLD ME OF THE EXISTENCE OF THIS MEDICINE.

SHE'S TAKEN CARE OF ME FOR A LONG TIME.

THAT'S THE AUTOMATON WHO ABDUCTED ME!

BARON...

HEUH

...IS YOU!

HEHEHEH! AP'TCHA NEVER LIES! THE LIAR..

BUT... THIS SOFT STONE...

...IS NOT IN MY BODY!

I REMEMBER WE..L...

...THE DAY THAT I MET YOU...

YOU KNOW, AP'TCHA...

IT WAS IN AN OLD ROOM OF THIS CASTLE THAT I MET YOU...

AND WHERE MY GRANDFATHER, CRAZY ABOUT MECHANICAL CLOCKS, OVER-INDULGED IN HIS COLLECTION.

IN THIS CASTLE WE HAD LIVED IN FOR GENER-ATIONS...

CLIC

I WILL GIVE YOU PERFECT HEALTH...

...AND ETERNAL LIFE.

IF YOU FOLLOW MY ADVICE,

...THE AUTOMATONS THAT NARUMI TOLD ME ABOUT?!

SO YOU ARE...

YOU KNOW, ELISE, I DIDN'T KNOW...

...THAT I'D HAVE TO EXTRACT THE STONE FROM YOUR BODY.

I WAS TOLD THAT ALITOMATONS AND HUMANS WERE NOT COMPATIBLE.

YOU KNOW...

YES...

YOU ARE NOT HELPING THE BARON ONLY TO PROVIDE HIM WITH A CURE.

IF THAT'S TRUE, WHAT IS YOUR TRUE GOAL?

A PACT?

ELISE, YOU ARE RIGHT. I MADE A PACT WITH AP'TCHA.

INDEED...

HA HA! ELISE WAS ALWAYS A SMART ONE!

HIGHNESS ...

...AND I WILL KILL YOU!

BUT AFTER RETRIEVING IT, YOU WILL BE OF NO USE TO ME ANYMORE ...

I WANT THIS STONE TO MAKE THE ELIXIR!

...IS YOU, PRINCESS.

AND WHAT INTER-ESTS ME...

...OR RATHER, INTER-ESTS...

FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP

...AN AUTOMATON ALSO HAS DESIRES...

.WHEN I REPLACE YOU?

WHAT WILL I FEEL...

BLACKOUT

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN THE POSITION OF A PRINCESS.

..THAT'S ME!!!

BUT ...

ACT IX : KARAKURI * THE PRINCESS OF THE AUTOMATONS

"GUY AND LUCILLE"

YOU'RE AN ADULT NOW. WE ARE THE SAME SIZE.

I WAS WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT WITH MUCH ANTICIPATION!

YES. I AM VERY HAPPY WITH THE RESULT.

AP'TCHA SCULPTED HERSELF BY CAREFULLY STUDYING YOUR FACE.

SHE LOOKS LIKE YOUR REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR!

YOU UNDER-STAND ...

...EVEN IF I'M AN AUTOMATON, I CAN'T SHRINK MYSELF.

WHEN I MET AP'TCHA, SHE TOLD ME SHE WOULD REPLACE YOU TEN YEARS LATER AND THAT AT THAT TIME, THE ELIXIR WOULD BE MINE.

YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME SO THAT A DOLL CAN REPLACE ME?

BUT BARON GÜNTHER HAS RECOVERED HIS STRENGTH

SINCE YOU'VE BEEN IN MY HANDS.

BY THE WAY... IT LOOKS LIKE YOU CHANGED YOUR HAIRSTYLE.

ALL THESE YEARS SPENT WAITING !!!

I ALMOST DIED IN THE MEANTIME!

IT'S TOO BAD.

YOU WERE MUCH MORE ELEGANT BEFORE!

SCHRIC

STOP!

THERE'S NO STONE IN MY BODY!

YES.

COME ON, REMOVE THE SOFT STONE FROM ELISE'S BODY!

HM?!

LUCILLE AND GUY CONFIRMED IT!!!

CLAC

SIR!

THEY'RE STILL HERE?

THE SHIROGANES ?!

INTRUDERS HAVE ENTERED THE BUILDING.

WHAT?

WELL, ADDRESS THE SITUATION QUICKLY! I PAY YOU MORE THAN ENOUGH TO EXPECT RESULTS!

AND THE GUARDS DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING.

OUR WELL-TRAINED GUARD DOGS WERE KILLED

TAH

BARON, I WILL NOW LEAVE FOR THE PRINCE'S.

OH!

WHEN YOU FIND THEM, KILL THOSE INTRUDERS!

IT'S YOUR JOB!!!

EVEN IF YOU'RE ONLY A PUPPET THAT MOVES DUE TO A MYSTERIOUS FORCE,

I'M FOREVER GRATEFUL.

YOU'VE ALWAYS TAKEN SUCH GOOD CARE OF ME DURING THESE 10 YEARS...

I'LL MISS YOU, AP'TCHA!

BAINES, GO WITH HER.

IT'S A PROMISE! SINCE YOU'LL LIVE AS A PRINCESS FROM NOW ON, I'LL FORGET YOU!

I, TOO, SHALL FORGET YOU.

YOU MUST FORGET ME.

MR. BAINES, THE INTRUDERS MAY BE EXTREMELY POWERFUL.

I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S AN ATTACK FROM A MILITARY GROUP.

WE'VE GOT TWO DOZEN MEN ARMED TO THE TEETH.

WHAT?! YOU'RE GIVING THEM ALL TO ME?

I'M LEAVING YOU WITH THE ALITOMATONS I CREATED. USE THEM AS YOU WILL.

DO EXPECT AN ATTACK FROM A BIG ARMY!

IF MY INTUITION IS CORRECT...

MR. BAINES,

YOU MEAN I HAVE TO GO TO A BALL GIVEN IN ELISE'S HONOR AT LOHENSTADT?

HEY! ONE MOMENT !!!

AND YOU TWO?

WE HAVE BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO. WE WILL JOIN YOU AFTERWARDS.

WE'VE ALREADY MADE ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS. YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GET IN JUST BY GIVING THEM YOUR NAME.

DEBUTANTE BALL!

AT THAT BALL OF...

BUT, LUCILLE, YOU ASKED ME NOT TO GET TOO CLOSE TO ELISE!

WHAT IF SHE SPOKE TO ME?

DO YOU FEEL SAD OR UNEASY? YOU JUST NEED TO MEOW LIKE A KITTEN!

BUT...

?

NO PROBLEM! TRY TO GET EVEN CLOSER TO HER DURING THE BALL.

...WE WILL COME TO THE BALL WITHOUT FAIL.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, NARUMI.

AND YOU, GUY, SINCE YOU GOT BACK WITH OLYMPIA, YOU'VE BEEN ACTING WE'RD TOO...

YOU'RE WE'RD, LUCILLE.

WHAT WITH CALLING PEOPLE EVERY-WHERE...

FINE.

I WON'T GET ANGRY EVEN IF YOU RUN LATE!

NO USE GETTING ANGRY.

SO...

I THINK NARUMI WILL GET VERY ANGRY...

But how am I gonna get there?

VRROMM

BUT IF HE CAN'T FIGHT, HE'LL GET ANGRY TOO.

HE'LL SAY "WHY DO I HAVE TO FIGHT SUCH STRONG OPPONENTS?"

CLIC CLAC

PRRR

HE WON'T BE HAPPY.

YES.

VLOM

TAN

HE'S SUCH A COMPLICATED BOY!

IT'S NOT EVEN COMPARABLE.

BUT THE MOST DIFFICULT PART IS UP TO US.

DA DA TA TA N N

ROGER

APPARENTLY, A SQUAD OF WELL-ARMED COMMANDO-TYPES IS GONNA TRY TO GET IN HERE.

SO BE CAREFUL!

ANYWAY, THEY DON'T HAVE A CHANCE...

AS LONG AS...

IF THEY WANNA COME THROUGH THE HELIPORT, I'LL TAKE CARE OF THEM!

NOT LIKELY.

ARE THEY POLICEMEN?

THOSE GUYS WITH US!

WE'VE GOT...

ME, I WANNA QUICKLY FORGET ALL THIS AND GO HAVE FUN IN NICE.

YEAH... I DUNNO HOW THEY MOVE LIKE THAT. GIVES ME THE SHIVERS...

WHEN I SAW THEM FOR THE FIRST TIME, I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES.

PUT

PUT

PUT

PUT

PUT

HUMANS BECOME QUITE WEAK WHEN PROMISED THINGS!

I IMAGINE THAT AN AUTOMATON, SEPARATED FROM THE MIDNIGHT CIRCUS, SUGGESTED TO HIM THAT THE STONE WAS IN THE PRINCESS'S BODY.

IT IS INDEED BARON GUNTHER'S CASTLE... EXACTLY AS THE PRINCESS SAID.

I CONFIRMED IT WHEN I FOLLOWED ELISE'S CAR WITH OLYMPIA.

THIS IS THE PLACE, LUCILLE.

THAT'S WHEN WE'LL BE NEEDED.

LUCILLE, HOW ARE WE GOING TO SAVE THE PRINCESS?

BECAUSE ALITOMATONS ALWAYS SEEK TO IMITATE HUMANS!

I THINK THE ALITOMATON IS SCHEMING TO TAKE THE PRINCESS'S PLACE...

HM... THEY MUST BE EXPECTING US.

I THINK I WILL CREATE A DIVERSION...

HOW ABOUT YOU, GUY? WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

NO! STOP! I BEG YOU!

SCHLAG!

... NARUM! WILL BE EVEN MORE ANGRY.

WE MUST HURRY, ELSE...

BUT... WE ARE OUT OF TIME.

YOU REMAIN CALM, GUY. THAT'S VERY GOOD.

AH?

AFTER YOUR DEATH, WE WILL DISSECT YOUR BODY AT OUR LEISURE TO LOOK FOR THE STONE.

DON'T WORRY, ELISE. THE INJECTION WORKS VERY WELL AND YOU WON'T FEEL A THING.

BARON GÜNTHER !!!

THERE'S NO STONE IN MY BODY!

NOOO!

SO LONG, ELISE!!!

NARUMI!

BROM

WHAT'S HAPPENING ?!

MMM

FIRE!

THEY'RE HERE!

AAA

GHH ...

AH!

BRRRAT

BLAM!

AAAH!

SURROUND THEM!

COME ON!!!

WHO ARE...

THESE GUYS?!

WHO... THE HECK ARE THEY?

...

BLAM

BLAM

M-1026-A

GOOU

ARGH!

73

OH, YEAH? THIS IS PROOF THAT YOU'RE NOT VERY CURIOUS!

LUCILLE... AS A SHIROGANE, I WAS NEVER TAUGHT SUCH OUTRIGHT VIOLENT METHODS...

UK

YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY HAVING A LOT OF FUN...

AREN'T YOU?

IN THE LONG HISTORY OF SHIROGANES,

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY FIGHTS OF THIS KIND.

DANCE FOR ME TODAY...

PERFECT.. I'M GOING TO HAVE SOME FUN TOO.

OH, HERE ARE NEW CUSTOMERS!

DON'T THINK ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE WHEN YOU'RE FIGHTING!

OLYMPIA!

BLACKOUT

GU H!

AAAH!

SCHLAC!!

ACT IX :
KARAKURI *
THE PRINCESS OF
THE AUTOMATONS

"THE LEGENDARY SHIROGANE"

BLOF

GOOOOHH

LOOK. HERE ARE SOME MORE. THEY'RE YOURS.

ZOH

Could you stop stepping on me?

DID I EVER TELL YOU THAT I ONCE HAD A MILITARY LOVER, A LONG TIME AGO?

BRAVO, LUCILLE...

DA DA DA

EVEN IF SHE'S THE GREATEST AUTOMATON DESTROYER ...

SHE'S JUST AN OLD FOOL!!!

OUR GUNS ARE GONNA BLOW THEM FULL OF HOLES!

AND EVEN IF HE'S ALREADY MANAGED TO KILL 200 AUTOMA-TONS IN ONE FIGHT ...

HE'S JUST A PRETENTIOUS BOY!!!

DANCE, MY DEAR OLYMPIA!

DA DA DA DA DA DA DA DA

WE ARE LIVING WEAPONS, CREATED BY AUTO-MATONS !!!

LES ARTS MARTIAUX!*

* MILITARY ARTS

PUSH

LIN

G

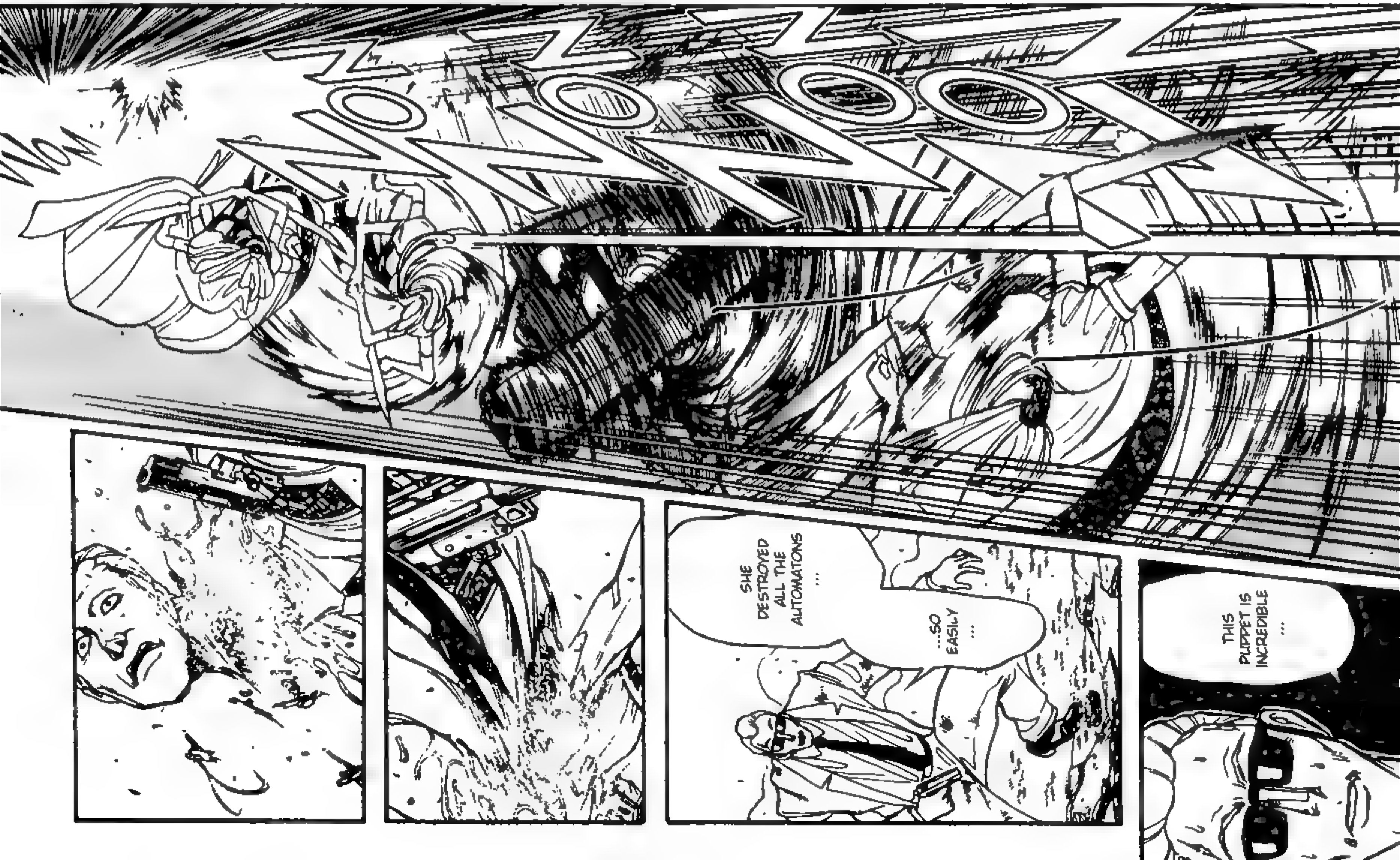
Sen

* RONDO OF DESTRUCTION

"RONDE DE LA DESTRUCTION*" !!!

Toi !

Grr


THIS PUPPET IS INCREDIBLE ...
SHE DESTROYED ALL THE AUTOMATONS ...
...SO EASILY ...

MR. BAINES, WHAT DO WE DO?!

ROGER'S BEEN KILLED!

AH!

...WHO ARE THEY?!

I'VE NEVER SEEN THAT...

A MAN WHO MANIPULATES A GIANT PUPPET AND AN OLD WOMAN WHO HANDLES A MACHINE GUN WITH ONE HAND...

MOVE OVER, GUY, OR YOU'LL GET STUFFED WITH LEAD!

BRRR

GAN

WE'LL BE THE ONES TO DESTROY THIS OLYMPIA EVERYONE THOUGHT TO BE PERFECT!

HE HE HE!

CLIC CLIC

!

NOW THAT HIS PUPPET IS TRAPPED, WE CAN KILL THE SHIRO-GANE WHO MANIPULATES HER!

ONCE THE PUPPET IS DESTROYED, EVEN THE OLD WOMAN WILL...

WE JUST GOTTA KILL HIM!

YEAH !

SAH...

REALLY...

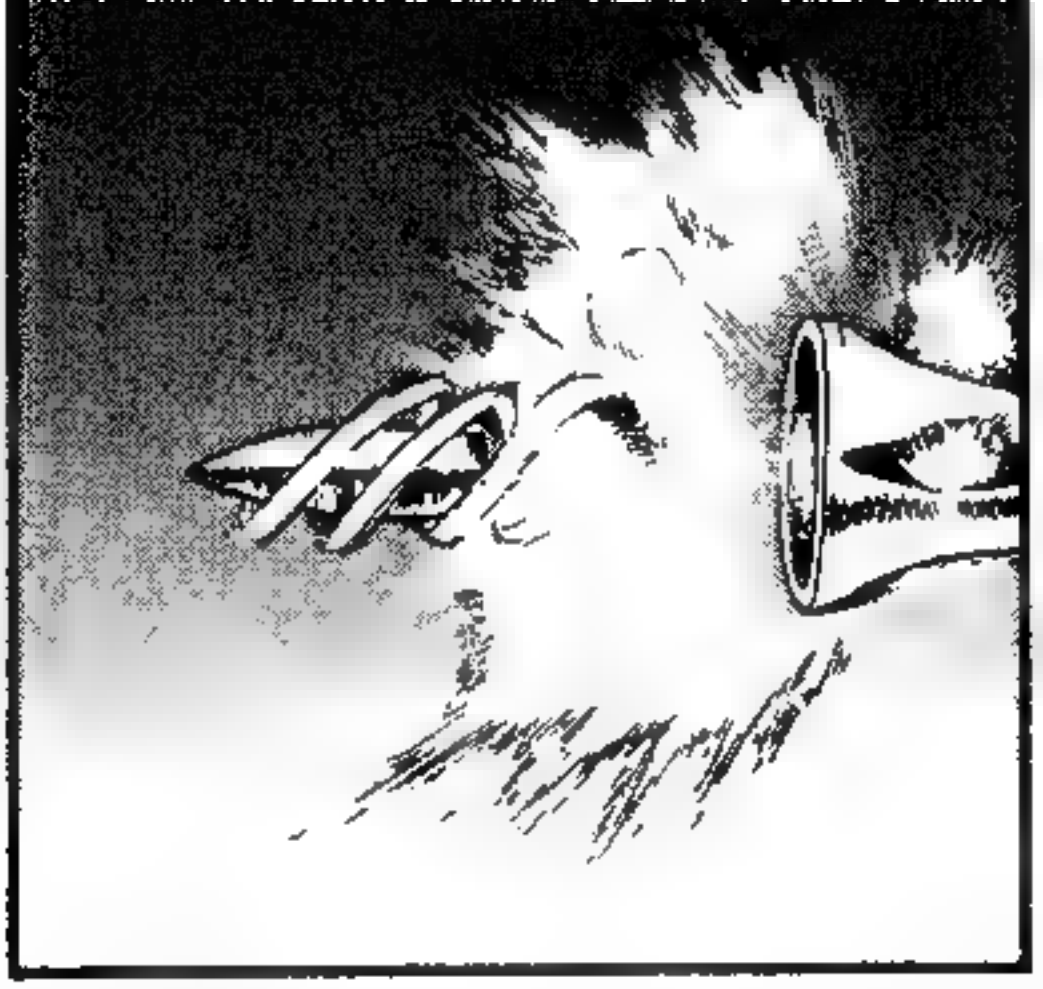
IMBECILE! WE'RE NOT LIKE THOSE WEAK HUMANS!

BULLETS ARE USELESS AGAINST US!

...JUST WHO DO YOU THINK I AM?!

VA VA VOOM

SAH...



WE TRIED TO REPRODUCE THE STRENGTH OF NARUMI'S BLOWS, THROUGH A ROTATING MOVEMENT AND THE ABILITY OF OUR FIBERS TO ASSUME ANY SHAPE...

ZOOOHH

THE THREADS THAT CONNECT THE SHIROGANE TO HIS PUPPET ARE MADE WITH VERY SPECIAL FIBERS.

WE DID NOT MANAGE TO GET IT COMPLETELY...

AAAAAH!

BLIT

...IT STILL WORKS PRETTY WELL, DOES IT NOT?

WE GOTTA DESTROY THIS PUPPET AT LEAST !!!

GUOH

SO...

GRRR! WE CAN'T KILL THOSE SHIROGA-NES.

GUPS

HA HA!
A PUPPET WITH SO MANY PARTS AND GEARS HAS GOTTA BE REALLY FRAGILE!

HA HA HA HA

GUY, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!

YOUR OLYMPIA WILL BE DESTROYED!

I KNOW THAT VERY WELL, LUCILLE.

CRAC

HEY! IT'S NOT THE TIME FOR THAT ROUTINE!

IF YOUR MAMA COULD SEE YOU SO POW-ERLESS ...

WHAT WOULD SHE SAY?

SHUT UP!

YOU KNOW IT? YOU KNOW IT WELL, HUH?!

YOU ALWAYS LET YOUR PUPPETS GET TRASHED THAT WAY !!!

SOON, THE LEGENDARY OLYMPIA WILL BE...

CLAC CLAC CLAC

HA HA... SOON...

IT'S YOUR TURN, OLYMPIA!

ZA

EMBRASSADE MORTELLE DE LA SAINTE VIERGE*

* DEADLY EMBRACE OF THE HOLY VIRGIN

ZAK

WHAT'S HE TRYING TO DO?

SCHLAC

WHAT IF THEY WERE EXTRACTED FROM YOUR BODIES?

YOU AUTOMATONS MOVE THANKS TO THESE PSEUDO-VITAL FLUIDS, YES?

CLIC CLIC CL

TECHTECH

WHAT?!

ZOOOHH

LING

NOOO !!!

AAAH!

GLOP GLOP GLOP GLOP GLOP

AH!
AH!
AH!

TAKE US TO ELISE.

I SUPPOSE ...

YOU MUST BE THE LEADER,

ZAN

AS SHAKE-SPEARE WOULD SAY...

YOU'RE INFINITELY GIFTED...

IN THE MANIPU-LATION OF PUPPETS ...

YOU LOOK LIKE AN EFFEMINATE PLAYBOY, BUT...

YOU STRIKE FEAR IN THE HEARTS OF AUTOMATONS, YOU, THE "SHIROGANE OF SHIROGANES."

"EVEN WITH AN HONEST FACE...

...ONE NEVER KNOWS WHAT HIS HANDS TOUCH." IS THAT WHAT YOU WANTED TO SAY?

BLACKOUT

CLAC

CLAC

CLAP

ACT IX :
KARAKURI *
THE PRINCESS OF
THE AUTOMATONS
"THE
DEBUTANTES
BALL"

EVEN WITH AN INFINITE NUMBER OF GUARDS, YOU CANNOT WIN AGAINST THE SHIROGANES.

I'M SORRY, BARON.

THE SOURCE OF THE MEDICINE YOU SEEK SO ANXIOUSLY...

SHUT UP! I WANTED TO TELL YOU THAT...

DESTROYERS OF AUTO-MATONS.

BUT...

WHO ARE YOU?

DOES NOT RESIDE IN ELISE'S BODY.

THE SOFT STONE...

GHH...

YOU LIE...

HA HA HA

DO NOT BE OBSTINATE. YOU HAVE EXPENDED YOUR EFFORTS IN VAIN.

VROOMM...

AH?

DO NOT WORRY ABOUT IT.

IT WAS PART OF OUR PLAN.

YOU SAVED MY LIFE AGAIN...

HOW CAN I THANK YOU...?

GOOH

YES.

OUR PLAN TO LOCATE THE AUTOMATONS AND THEIR LEADER.

SPA FF

EXACTLY.

THEN... THIS MEANS THAT...

YOU LET ME BE CAPTURED ON PURPOSE TO DISCOVER ...

YOUR HIGHNESS

ONLY SHIROGANES, DESTROYERS OF AUTO-MATONS,

WE ARE...

I WAS NEARLY KILLED!

HOW *COULD* YOU?

VRROM

THE FESTIVAL HAS ALREADY BEGUN, I THINK.

NARUMI ...

NARUMI HASN'T REACHED THAT STAGE YET.

WE *MUST* DESTROY THE AUTOMATONS! HUMAN LIFE IS NOTHING TO US.

RRR

Lohenstadt, The Capital

TOUT TOUT

VROOM PIII

TUT TUT

THE GUESTS WHO ARE GOING TO THE BALL ARE CUTTING OFF ALL TRAFFIC.

THEY SAY THAT PRINCESS ELISE ASKED THE PRINCE TO ORGANIZE THE DEBUTANTES BALL THAT WAS CANCELLED THE OTHER DAY.

TUT TUT

WHY IS THE ROAD BLOCKED?

NO ONE ANNOUNCED THAT THE ROADS WOULD BE CLOSED!

MY FRIEND MICHAEL, WHO IS A FLORIST, IS BEING OVER-WHELMED WITH THE AMOUNT OF FLOWERS HE HAS TO DELIVER TO THE PALACE.

BLA BLA BLA

SHE CERTAINLY DOESN'T WANT TO DELAY HER DEBUT IN SOCIETY.

BLA BLA BLA

I THOUGHT THE PRINCESS HAD VANISHED. SHE JUST RETURNED?

VROUMM

TUUT TUUT

COME ON, LET ME IN!

BUT IF I LET YOU GO JUST BECAUSE YOU TELL ME TO,

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL I HAVE TO ALLOW IN, EH?

I TOLD YOU, I CAME BECAUSE I WAS INVITED BY THE PRINCESS!

MY PASSPORT IS...

MY NAME IS NARUMI KATO...

UH...

ARE YOU DERANGED?

FINE, GIVE ME YOUR NAME AND PASSPORT, IF YOU WILL?

ALL IS WELL. YOU CAN ENTER.

YES! YOU HAVE A GLOVE ON YOUR LEFT HAND TOO ...

AH?!

NARUMI KATO?! YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID THAT EARLIER!

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT ...

AH... NO, IN TRUTH.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I WAS TOLD TO ADMIT A PERSON THAT FIT YOUR PROFILE.

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE JET SET?

WHY DID YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND?

THIS BALL IS RESERVED FOR SMART PEOPLE...

PEOPLE OF HIGH SOCIETY.

YOU ARE MR. NARUMI KATO, THE SHIROGANE... YES, I AM AWARE...

HUH?

BUT YOUR OUTFIT ...

I HAVE TO LET YOU IN, BY ORDER OF HIS HIGHNESS THE PRINCE.

YES, I KNOW!

I SHOULDN'T BE HERE!

HM...

HM...

HM...

POOF

WHY DON'T YOU LEND ME A COSTUME?

BLA BLA

HEUH HEUH

THIS SHIRT IS TOO SMALL!

HEUH HEUH

HIS HIGHNESS THE PRINCE WILL TOLERATE YOUR PRESENCE HERE, BUT WE WILL BE WATCHING YOU. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU COULD DO.

WHY ARE YOU STAYING SO CLOSE TO ME?

BUT I AM CALM!

HEY! CALM DOWN!

THE SITUATION REQUIRED ...

FINE.

MP!

THE SITUATION ...

MAIN ENTRANCE GALLERY, FOLLOW THE PLAN.

SOUTH GALLERY, ON STAND-BY, ALL IS WELL.

THE SHIROGANES ASKED ME TO LET YOU DO AS YOU WISHED

BUT THEN TO POSITION THE ARMED FORCES.

ELISE, IS THIS WHAT YOU WANTED?

I AM GRATEFUL THAT YOU ACCEPTED MY REQUEST.

IT WAS NOTHING.

IN FACT, I WAS VERY SURPRISED TO HEAR YOU ASK ME TO ORGANIZE THE DEBUTANTE BALL UPON YOUR RETURN.

FATHER.

THANK YOU,

PRINCESS, IT IS TIME.

BUT I COULD NOT BELIEVE IT UNTIL YOU VANISHED.

I SPOKE WITH THE SHIROGANES FOR THE FIRST TIME.

I HAD KNOWN OF THEIR EXISTENCE FROM THE INFORMATION I RECEIVED FROM OTHER COUNTRIES.

YOU WILL MAKE YOUR DEBUT INTO SOCIETY

AND THE COUNTRY WILL SEE THE BIRTH OF A GRAND LADY.

FATHER ...

I, AN AUTOMATON?

WHOM ARE THESE GUARDS HERE TO PROTECT?

WHAT'S UP WITH THE SHIRO-GANES?

I CAN NOW ACT AS A HUMAN, AND FURTHER, AS A PRINCESS OF A COUNTRY.

THIS IS IT. I WILL BE RECOGNIZED TONIGHT.

TONIGHT, I, APTCHA...

YOU CREATED ME, AND

MISTRESS FRANCINE...

CLAP CLAP

THE HUMANS WHO LEAD THIS WORLD!

CLAP CLAP

WILL DOMINATE!

THE PRINCESS ELISE OF LOHENSTEIN!

CLAP CLAP CLAP

I TOLD YOU, YOU CAN'T!

LET GO OF ME! I JUST WANT TO TALK TO HER!

BOM DOM

HIGHNESS ...

SAH...

AND I TOLD YOU, IT'S DISRE-SPECTFUL!

LUCILLE TOLD ME TO GO TALK TO HER!

AH...

REMOVE YOURSELF.

THIS PERSON SAVED MY LIFE.

WOULD YOU DO ME THE HONOR OF DANCING WITH ME?

ELISE...

BEEEHH

I JUST HAD TO COPY ATTITUDES, THOUGHTS...

I WAS ABLE TO "BECOME" ELISE PERFECTLY.

EVEN HER FATHER, THE PRINCE, DIDN'T SUSPECT A THING!

THEN...

UH... BUT...

TONIGHT, I, AP'TCHA, WILL WIN EVERY-THING!

MISTRESS FRANCINE ...

LOOK!

EVEN THE SHIROGANE EXPECTED TO RECOGNIZE AUTOMATONS IMMEDIATELY ...

HE REALLY THINKS I'M ELISE!

FORGET ABOUT IT!

IN TRUTH...

YOU BECAME VERY HAPPY ALL OF A SUDDEN!

AND THE BURNT MANNEQUINS?

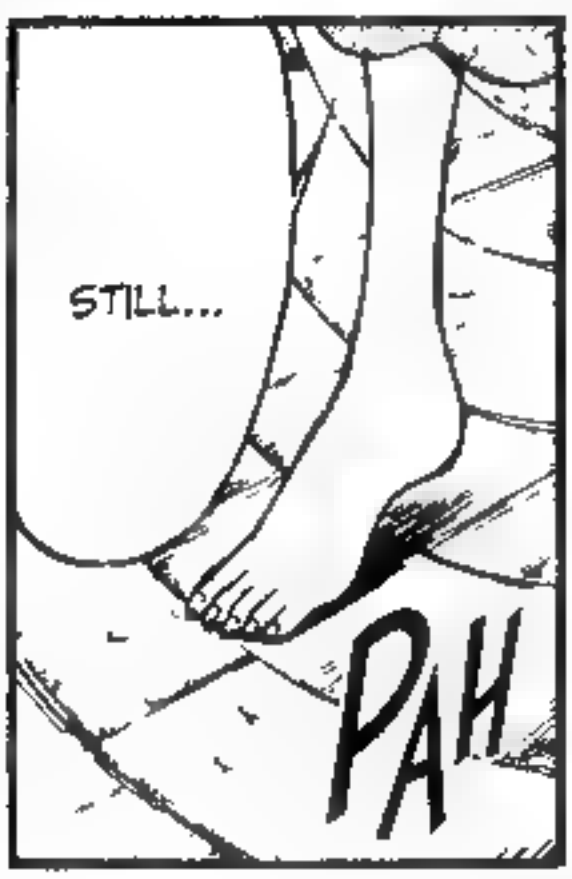
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

OOPS! I'M NO GOOD AT DANCING!

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THEM ONE DAY... WITH YOU!

BLACKOUT

ACT IX : KARAKURI *
THE PRINCESS OF THE AUTOMATONS
"TWO ELISES"



HEY! WAIT A SECOND!

I DON'T WANNA STAY WITH PEOPLE LIKE YOU...

CAPABLE OF LETTING AUTO-MATONS ABDUCT ME JUST TO FIND THEIR HAUNT!

FOOL!

THE BALL HAS ALREADY STARTED. A COMMON GIRL LIKE YOU CAN'T ...

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN...?

PRIN-CESS ELISE ?!

AH!

WHO ARE YOU CALLING "A COMMON GIRL"?!

YES...

SAH...

LET ME THROUGH!

YES!!

DON'T LET THESE PEOPLE IN!

GUNS ARE USELESS AGAINST AN AUTOMATON LIKE AP'TCHA.

IT WAS ONLY TO GAIN TIME.

PRIN-CESS!

THEY'LL DESTROY THE AUTOMATON WHO'S TRYING TO STEAL MY IDENTITY, WON'T THEY?

YOU'VE PUT MEN IN STRATEGIC PLACES.

PLEASE.

PRINCESS!

WHAT SHOULD WE DO, GUY?

YOU! COME HERE!

DAH

ALL RIGHT, GUY.

SHIROGANES DON'T HAVE TO FOLLOW HUMANS' RULES.

WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME?

AND THAT IT'S AN ALITOMATON TRYING TO KILL ME IN ORDER TO BECOME THE PRINCESS OF LOHENSTEIN...

I HAVE TO TELL EVERYONE THAT SOMEONE'S TRYING TO SUPERSEDE ME...

BROLOM

...

...

HAHAHA BLA BLA

BLA BLA

OOHH!!

A

ZOH

I'M THE REAL ONE!

NARUMI, YOU'RE NOT DANCING WITH THE RIGHT ELISE!

WAIT! DON'T SHOOT!

WHAT'S GOING ON?! ANOTHER PRIN-CESS...

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN ?!

NARUMI...

NO... WHAT'S THAT GIRL TALKING ABOUT?

OOOH

FATHER!

ELISE!

...HEUH...

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

AND TONIGHT, I AM FINALLY ABLE TO MAKE MY DEBUT INTO SOCIETY WITH THIS BALL.

FATHER, I'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT LATELY.

I AM ELISE, YOUR DAUGHTER! THAT PERSON TOOK MY APPEARANCE, BUT SHE'S ACTUALLY AN AUTOMATON!

HN HN...

BY MAKING PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT I'M A FALSE PRINCESS?

WHY WOULD GOD WANT TO IMPOSE UPON ME ANOTHER HUMILIA-TION...

FATHER ...

ELISE...

...

FATHER !!

NO... MY OWN FATHER ISN'T RECOG-NIZING ME...

IT'S UNBELIEVABLE! THE BEHAVIOUR, THE VOICE... THEY BOTH ARE "ELISE"...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY... THEY BOTH SEEM TO BE REAL TO ME...

I THOUGHT IT WAS PART OF THE SHOW... THAT GIRL IS CRAZY!

I SAW RIGHT AWAY THAT SHE WAS THE REAL IMPOSTOR.

LOOK CAREFULLY, HER EYES AND HER CHIN ARE NOT THE ONES OF THE PRINCESS!

THE REAL PRINCESS WOULD NEVER DRESS LIKE THAT!

SHE APPEARS ALL OF A SUDDEN AND KEEPS SAYING THAT THE PRINCESS IS AN IMPOSTOR!

WHO'S THAT GIRL?!

BUT... NO!

I HAVE AN IDEA...

FIGHT EACH OTHER!

WHAT ?!

WOULD YOU HAVE A BETTER IDEA?

TELLING A PRINCESS TO FIGHT...

HOW DISRESPECTFUL!

YOU ARE... ONE OF THE SHIROGANES...

SO... THE ONE WHO'S GONNA WIN IS THE FALSE PRINCESS.

WHY SHOULD THEY FIGHT?

WELL ...

THAT PERSON WILL PROBABLY BEAT THE REAL PRINCESS, WHO WAS RAISED LIKE A GOOD LADY WITHOUT KNOWING HOW THE WORLD IS ON THE OUTSIDE.

THE ONE WHO'S TRYING TO SUPERSEDE THE REAL PRINCESS MUST AIM FOR SOMETHING.

THAT MAN IS A REAL IDIOT!

AN IDIOT!

FATHER, HOW COULD YOU IMPOSE UPON ME SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

BUT WE HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE.

THAT'S NOT REALLY ELEGANT...

UNTIL NOW, I HAVE FAILED BECAUSE THE BARON COULDN'T GET RID OF ELISE, BUT TODAY, VICTORY WILL BE MINE!

IT'S A TEST... I WOULDN'T HAVE ANY PROBLEM BEATING THE PRINCESS...

AH!

BUT...

WE MUST FIGHT?

AND THEN, THE WINNER WILL BE CONSIDERED...

FOR ME?!

DID NARUMI SAY THAT ON PURPOSE?!

YES!

I KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO DO!!

CLAC

UNTIL ONE OR THE OTHER DOES SOME-THING.

DON'T SHOOT...

KEEP YOUR BODY STRAIGHT, ALIGNED WITH YOUR SHOULDERS.

YOU STILL DON'T GET IT!!

FOOL!

BUT...

WHAT'S SHE DOING?

AH...

AND TURN MY BODY 45 DEGREES ON THIS SIDE...

I RAISE MY HAND... SLIGHTLY LOWER IT...

HELP!

DO IT, ELISE! YOU'VE LOST FOREVER! I'LL FALL ON PURPOSE!

I BEND FORWARD ...

STRENU-OUSLY TURN MY HIP AND SHOULDER AND THEN ...

FH ...

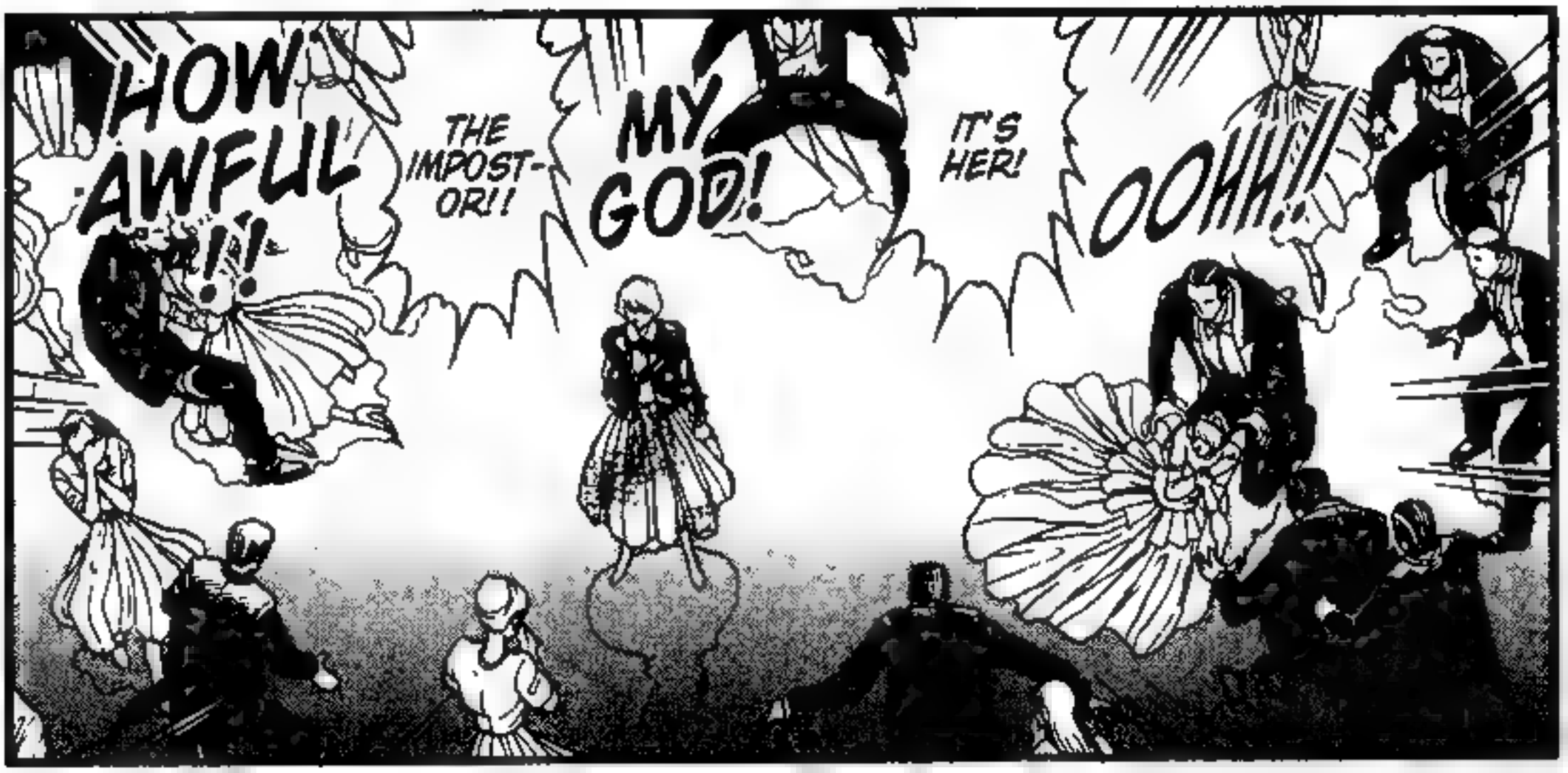
FH ...

AHH!

...I HIT!

SHAFF

SHE'S THE IMPOST-OR!
SHE HIT HER!


HOW AWFUL!!!
THE IMPOST-OR!!
MY GOD!
IT'S HER!
OOHH!!

HINCH

AIM AT HER!
SCHLAC

...IS AN IMITATION!

THE OTHER ONE...

THIS IS THE REAL PRINCESS.

TAN TAN TAN

SHOOT!!

AIN'T THAT RIGHT, AP'TCHA?!

HURRY! SHOOT!!

BARON GÜNTHER!

THAT MAN AND THE GIRL ARE WORKING TOGETHER!

DAMN!!

DARLING

BLACKOUT

ACT IX : KARAKURI *
THE PRINCESS OF THE AUTOMATONS

"A BALL IN THE MIDST OF THE FLAMES"

HIGHNESS, STEP BACK!
WHAT ?!

IAAHHHH!!
TANTANTAN!

IN POSITION!

FIRE!!

DAMN!

DA DA DA

!!

WA WA WA

BLAM BLAM

DON'T BE SO SURPRISED. YOUR LIFE MEANS NOTHING TO US...

OUR ONLY AIM IS TO DESTROY AUTOMATONS.

WHAT?! BUT... YOU...

PAF

...

CRAC

GOOOH...

BUT OUR LIVES ARE EVEN MORE WORTHLESS THAN YOURS.

YOU USED YOUR OWN BODIES TO PROTECT US?!

GUY!

LUCILLE!

IF YOUR ONLY GOAL IS TO DESTROY AUTOMA-TONS...

I DON'T UNDER-STAND!

YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO PROTECT ME!

YOU WERE RIGHT ...

AND EVEN THOUGH ...

AT LEAST ... I COULD FIND...

WHAT?

WHAT DO YOU THINK? WITH ALL THOSE BULLETS IN MY BODY ...

HEY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, OLD HAG ?!

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

DAMN YOU, GUY!

NOOOO!!

SQUAD!! ATTENTION!!

THAT THING IS NOT HUMAN!

WAAAHHH! HER BODY IS RIDDLED WITH BULLETS AND SHE'S STILL ABLE TO MOVE!

AHH!! MOVE!!!

CALL BACKUP!

HIGHNESS, OVER HERE...

ELISE ...

DAMN SHIRO-GANES!!

HOW SHAMEFUL!

GH H...

AH!

WHOOF

OUR TARGET HAS TAKEN THE PRINCESS' APPEARANCE!

SHOOT ON SIGHT! DON'T MISS HER!

MISTRESS FRANCINE!

WHAT A WASTE!

WE CAN'T TRUST AN AUTOMATON LIKE HER!

...TRIED TO KILL ME TOO!

BAINES... MY AP'TCHA ...

WATCH OUT, BARON!

GOOF

HI!!!!

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?

GHH!

VOOF

FAREWELL... PRINCE-THAT-COULD'VE-BEEN-MY-FATHER!!

THE ONLY THING LEFT TO DO IS DRENCH EVERYTHING HERE WITH MY ANGER!

IT'S OVER! NOW THAT MY PROJECT IS RUINED...

WING

SCHLING!!

I'LL NEVER LET YOU DO THIS!

DAMN SHIRO-GANE !!

JUST TRY IT!

NARUMI... BE CAREFUL ...

HEUH

HEUH

THEY'RE FIGHTING ...

FATHER!

ELISE!

NO! STAND UP!

PRINCESS, WE'VE BEEN BADLY HIT...

LEAVE US!

OUT OF THE QUESTION!

COME ON, TAKE HER!

WHAT?

THOSE PEOPLE ...

WHAT A RELIEF, YOU'RE SAFE AND SOUND!

YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING FOR THEM ...

I WON'T GO ANYWHERE...

IF THEY DON'T COME WITH US!

I'M AN AUTOMATON, CREATED BY MISTRESS FRANCINE HERSELF! I WAS SUPPOSED TO HELP HER IN HER DAILY TASKS.

WHAT A STRANGE SHIROGANE YOU ARE.

YOU WANNA KNOW THAT NOW?!

WHY DID YOU WANT TO TAKE ELISE'S PLACE?

TELL ME ONE THING...

SHE'S THE MAIDEN OF THE AUTOMATONS. SHE'S NOBLER, PRETTIER AND SMARTER THAN ALL THE HUMANS GATHERED TOGETHER.

MISTRESS FRANCINE IS OUR CREATOR. SHE'S THE ONE WHO GAVE LIFE TO EVERY AUTOMATON...

SO, WE DECIDED TO MAKE A CIRCUS BAND IN ORDER TO TRAVEL THE WORLD AND FIND A WAY TO MAKE HER LAUGH.

IS DEEPLY ENGRAVED INSIDE US.

WE'VE BEEN CREATED TO MAKE HER LAUGH. THAT FUNCTION...

ALL THE GRATINGS OF MY WHEELS DISAPPEARED WHEN SHE WAS CARESSING MY HEAD...

THE SIMPLE ACT OF HEARING HER VOICE MADE ME HAPPY.

MISTRESS FRANCINE IS REALLY KIND.

AP'TCHA, ONLY A FEW HUMANS WOULD CONSIDER THIS PLACE BEAUTIFUL.

I DON'T SEE WHAT'S SO BEAUTIFUL ...

BUT IF YOU SAY SO, IT MEANS THAT HUMANS MUST SEE BEAUTY IN IT...

IT'S BEAUTI-FUL, ISN'T IT?

AP'TCHA ...

AND THAT DIFFERENCE IN POINTS OF VIEW CAUSES CONFLICTS AND EVEN WARS TO THE POINT OF MAKING A LANDSCAPE LIKE THIS TOTALLY DISAPPEAR.

OBVIOUSLY, THEY DON'T ...

SO, ALL HUMANS DON'T FEEL THE SAME THING?

THAT'S THE REASON WHY...

THE EYES YOU GAVE US MAKE ALL THE AUTOMATONS SEE THE SAME THING.

WHY DON'T THEY USE EYEBALLS OF BETTER QUALITY?!

THAT IS WEIRD, MISTRESS ...

IF IT'S A SOURCE OF CONFLICT,

THAT'S WHY IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO CHANGE OUR FEELINGS AND WAYS OF ACTING SIMPLY BECAUSE OF A DIFFERENCE IN POINT OF VIEW.

...I CAN'T LAUGH.

TELL ME, AP'TCHA...

MISTRESS!

WE'LL PROBABLY NEVER BE ABLE TO CHANGE...

SINCE WE ALL SEE THE SAME THING...

IF WE COULD UNDER-STAND HOW THEY SEE US AND EMULATE THAT IN OUR THINKING, THEN MAYBE WE AUTOMATONS MIGHT BE ABLE...

...TO CHANGE?!

IF WE COULD REPLACE HUMANS?

WHAT WOULD WE FEEL...

HHH

IF WE COULD REPLACE HUMANS...

SINCE THAT DAY, HER WORDS...

HAUNT MY SPIRIT!

BUT SINCE MISTRESS FRANCINE IS ONE OF THE NOBLEST PEOPLE, I COULDN'T TAKE THE PLACE OF A MERE WOMAN.

THEN I WOULD BE ABLE TO TEACH HER WHAT HUMANS REALLY FEEL.

BESIDES, THAT OLD GEEZER BELIEVED IN ALL MY PROMISES!

WE ALITO-MATONS HAVE TIME.

SO, THAT'S WHY YOU CHOSE ELISE?!

AP'TCHA!

NO!

SHAFT

MY STORY IS OVER, SHIROGANE.

DAMN!

AND THAT'S THE END FOR YOU TOO!!

BOOM

BLACKOUT

ACT IX : KARAKURI *
THE PRINCESS OF THE AUTOMATONS
"THE PRINCESS OF THE AUTOMATONS"

NN... NN...

WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS TOGETHER!

GUY, LUCILLE, I'LL NEVER LEAVE WITHOUT YOU.

GUHH... PGHH...

GOOD! YOU'RE STILL HERE.

AH!

GOOHH

1

HA HA! I BURNT HIM!

GOOH!

WHERE'S NARUMI?

APTCHA ...

HE DARED RUIN MY PLAN!

HE DESERVED IT!

CRAC

CLAC

GOOH!

BARON SHE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF YOU IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE HER OWN PURPOSES!

GOOH!

APTCHA WHY?

WHY DID YOU LIE TO ME?

TAN

BAINES ...

I'M OUTTA HERE! YOU CAN KEEP YOUR MONEY!

IT'S NOT WORTH DYING!

I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN YOU, AP'TCHA ...

NO... NO!

PCHH... CHHH...

YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN AN OBEDIENT GIRL, NEVER INQUIRING ABOUT ANYTHING.

I WATCHED YOU FOR OVER TEN YEARS IN ORDER TO BECOME A PERFECT COPYCAT.

HUH?!

LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING ...

ELISE.

DON'T YOU THINK I CAN TAKE YOUR PLACE?

I MAY BE AN AUTOMATON, BUT I AM FAR BETTER SUITED TO PLAY THIS ROLE!

YOU'RE JUST A MANNEQUIN ON SHOW IN A WINDOW!

WHO WOULD BOTHER IF I TOOK YOUR PLACE?

GOOH

AS A PRINCESS, YOU'RE NOT WORTH A MERE MANNEQUIN!!

GOOH

HAS BECOME REALITY!

TO FINALLY DISAP-PEAR...

IN WHICH I SLOWLY AM CONSUMED...

THE NIGHTMARE ...

GRRAH

AND I'LL TELL MISTRESS FRANCINE WHAT I SEE AND HOW MUCH I HAVE CHANGED WHEN I LIVE AS A PRINCESS!

UNTIL NOW, I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING, BUT SOON...

IT'S NOT OVER YET! I'M GONNA KILL YOU AND THEN TAKE YOUR PLACE!

YES! THAT'S IT!

GHH

GHH

I WAS ALWAYS COMPLAINING, THINKING I HAD NO LIBERTY.

U

U

SADNESS ...

...

ANGER...

FEAR OF DEATH...

JOY AND HATRED ...

BUT THANKS TO YOU, I COULD EXPERIENCE A LOT OF FEELINGS.

I WAS JUST A MEDICINE FOR MY UNCLE GÜNTHER.

AND FOR YOU, A MANNEQUIN TO REPLACE.

THAT THERE'RE AS MANY POINTS OF VIEW AS PEOPLE ON EARTH.

AND THEN I LEARNT...

...SHORT-HAIRED ANNOYING WOMAN.

THAT I AM THE CUTEST...

SEVERAL DAYS AGO, SOMEONE TOLD ME...

AN "ANNOYING WOMAN".

HOW LOVELY!

WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT? HAVE YOU GONE INSANE?

AND I WON'T BE A MANNE-QUIN ANY LONGER.

I AM ELISE, A HUMAN BEING.

I'VE CHANGED A LOT SINCE I'VE MET NEW PEOPLE AND LIVED NEW EXPERIENCES.

I'M STARTING TO SEE THE BLUE SKY BEYOND THE DARK CLOUDS.

BUT YOU, AP'TCHA, YOU'RE JUST AN AUTO-MATON.

WILL YOU EVER BE ABLE TO CHANGE?!

OHH

TIC

EVEN IF I DIE...

I'M GONNA KILL YOU IN A FEW SECONDS!

HA HA HA!! WHAT'S THE POINT?

THIS IS RIDICULOUS!

APTCHA ...

FEELING ALIVE.

I'LL FINALLY BE ABLE TO DIE...

I WON'T LEAVE THIS WORLD AS A MANNE-QUIN.

GHA-GHA-GHH

AT FIRST, I WAS AFRAID OF YOU, BUT I CHANGED MY MIND DURING THE PAST TEN YEARS...

NOBODY WAS AS DEVOTED AS YOU...

SHUT UP!

TELL ME YOU DIDN'T BETRAY ME!

GET LOST, HUMAN !!

I DON'T NEED THE AQUA VITAE ANYMORE, JUST YOU!

YOU'RE MY TRUE DAUGHTER ...

LET'S STOP THIS AND RUN AWAY TOGETHER ...

AP'TCHA...

DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT YOU WERE JUST BAIT IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE MY PROJECT?!

WHAT ?!

YOU'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO REPLACE A HUMAN BEING...

IN THE END, AFTER LIVING WITH YOU FOR THE PAST TEN YEARS, BARON GÜNTHER LOVES YOU.

BUT YOU, YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL.

BUT ...

EVEN I HAVE CHANGED BECAUSE I'M HUMAN.

A HUMAN BEING CAN CHANGE INFINITELY ACCORDING TO HER EXPERIENCES.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...

ANYTHING ABOUT ME!!

BECAUSE A PUPPET WILL NEVER CHANGE.

YOU CAN'T...

RR

GRR...

BLACK

AND I WON'T LET AN AUTOMATON TAKE MY PLACE!!

ANYWAY, THERE'S ONE THING I KNOW FOR SURE...

I'M THE PRINCESS OF LOWEN-STEIN!!

DIE! FOOLISH PRINCESS!

NARUMI, THANK YOU...

FOR TEACHING ME HOW TO PUNCH.

AND TURN MY BODY 45 DEGREES ON THIS SIDE...

I RAISE MY HAND... SLIGHTLY LOWER IT...

KEEP YOUR BODY STRAIGHT, ALIGNED WITH YOUR SHOULDERS.

I SAY GOODBYE...

...TO YOU!!

STRENUOUSLY TURN MY HIP AND SHOULDER AND THEN...

GYAAHHH!! SHIROGA-NEEEE!!

NA...
NARUMI
?!

AH...

SAH...

SHIBUMI

INTO PIECES
HAS SMASHED MY NIGHT-MARE!...

NARUMI ...

MISTRESS FRANCINE...

I WAS USELESS IN THE END!!

I WAS SO CLOSE !!

DOH

AAAH !!

WE'LL LEAVE TOGETHER.

IT'S GONNA BE OKAY, AP'TCHA.

MISTRESS FRANCINE...

WILL THE AUTOMATONS EVER BE ABLE TO CHANGE?

DOH

YES

...

AP'TCHA

MISTER GÜNTHER

GOOHH

YES.

LET'S GO BACK HOME.

I LOST CONSCIOUSNESS AFTER HEARING THE SHRIEKS OF THE BARON.

IAAAAAAAAAHHH!!

I NEVER HAD...

A NIGHTMARE AGAIN...

I HAD THE FEELING THAT TOUGH ARMS WERE HOLDING ME, BUT I COULDN'T OPEN MY EYES.

BLACKOUT

ACT IX : KARAKURI * THE PRINCESS OF THE AUTOMATONS "TEMPORARY CURTAIN DROP"

YOU'RE SAFE AND SOUND?!

YOU!

YOU'RE FINALLY AWAKE, PRINCESS.

DAN

PRZ

BUT OUR CLOTHES ARE COMPLETELY SPOILED...

YES, INDEED!

OUR WOUNDS HAVE TOTALLY DISAPPEARED.

AH... THAT MAN...

LOOK OUTSIDE...

I REALIZE THAT I WAS A REAL PAMPERED CHILD WHEN I THINK OF WHAT I WAS COMPLAINING ABOUT BEFORE MEETING YOU.

NO... IT'S JUST THAT...

YOU REALLY ARE DIFFERENT FROM HUMAN BEINGS...

DOES THAT SCARE YOU?

NOW THAT HE KNOWS HIS BOSS IS DEAD...

HE'S RUNNING AWAY...

IT'S BAINES, BARON GÜNTHER'S PERSONAL BODYGUARD.

AH?

YOU KNOW, PRINCESS, I THINK THAT HIS BEHAVIOR IS UNDERSTANDABLE.

MY UNCLE...

YOU COULD'VE BEATEN AP'TCHA AND LEFT ME SOMEWHERE SAFE MEAN-WHILE...

I WAS THINKING THAT...

BUT YOU DID EVERYTHING TO MAKE ME FIGHT HER...

...

BUT THE HUMAN HEART CAN TAKE ANOTHER DIRECTION ACCORDING TO WHAT ONE BELIEVES IN.

TORMENTED WITH HATRED AND DESPAIR ...

THE BARON HAD NO OPTION OTHER THAN TO CONSUME LIKE A MANNEQUIN.

ONLY HUMANS CAN DO THAT.

LIKE BAINES, WE CAN RUN AWAY IF WE FEEL THE END COMING...

THE MANNEQUIN WOULD BECOME HUMAN?

DID YOU HOPE THAT I WOULD STAND AGAINST HER SO THAT...

PRINCESS, SHIROGANES ARE MERCI-LESS...

BUT THAT BRUTE HASN'T REACHED THAT STAGE YET.

WELL, WELL... THE PRINCESS IS STARTING TO THINK BY HERSELF...

NARUMI!

FHH...

HEH, PRETTY PRINCESS, HOW ARE YOU?

AN IDIOT!

YOU ARE ...

AN IDIOT!

VRROMM...

I'M SORRY...

HERE'S YOUR PALACE, PRINCESS.

WE'LL NEVER SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN.

WHEN YOU'VE TURNED AT THE CORNER OF THAT STREET ...

RO LOM

TAH...

WHAT AN OAF!!

COME ON, WALK WITH HER!

AH...

HUH?

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, NARUMI?

I DIDN'T HAVE THAT DREAM.

EARLIER ...

YES... A NIGHT-MARE...

THE STORY OF THE BURNING MANNEQUINS I TOLD YOU?

DO YOU REMEMBER ...

CONGRATU-LATIONS!

YOU WOULD SPEND DAYS TAKING CARE OF HUNTING AND EQUI-TATION...

AND GO TO BEAUTIFUL RECEPTIONS AT NIGHTS.

HAVE YOU EVER HAD A DREAM ...

IN WHICH YOU WOULD BECOME AN ARISTOCRAT OF A SMALL COUNTRY?

NARUMI ...

HUH... WHAT?!

BY YOUR SIDE, THERE WOULD BE THE PRINCESS OF THAT COUNTRY ...

THEN ...

BUT IT WOULDN'T BE A FIRST...

SO...

AT FIRST, THE KING WOULDN'T WELCOME A STRANGER IN HIS FAMILY...

IT WAS A YOUNG...

SILVER-EYED WOMAN...

I HAD A GRAVE ACCIDENT IN JAPAN AND I LOST PARTS OF MY MEMORY.

WHAT?

OR WHAT OUR RELATIONSHIP WAS.

I DON'T KNOW HOW I MET HER

I REMEMBER THE FACE OF THAT WOMAN.

BUT...

AND I'M FORCED TO DESTROY ALITOMA-TONS...

NOW, ONE OF MY ARMS IS ARTIFICIAL

YOU LOVED HER...

BUT SHE'S STILL THERE, IN MY MEMORY.

SHE LOOKED SO SAD.

...

BUT I HOPE THAT ONE DAY...

I'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE THAT YOUNG WOMAN LAUGH.

IT'S LIKE THAT...

THE FIRST TIME I MET YOU...

I CLEARLY REMEMBER ...

VRROMM

I WON'T FORGIVE YOU!

SORRY ..

...

YOU'RE THE KIND OF GUY WHO DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO TALK TO WOMEN!

I KNEW THAT ...

SAH...

YOU'RE GONNA DANCE WITH ME.

AS A PUNISH-MENT

I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FALL IN LOVE WITH A GUY LIKE THAT IF I WERE THE PRINCESS.

WHAT A LOUT! HE'S TOO SLOW!

I SEE THAT YOU'VE ALREADY PREPARED YOUR VIOLIN...

...DON'T YOU?

EVEN SO, YOU LIKE HIM, GUY...

MY HEART WAS BROKEN ...

NARUMI, AT THAT TIME...

TO BE HERE...

NOW...

I'M GLAD...

...SO CLOSE TO YOU.

WHEN I SAW THAT OTHER WOMAN...

I HAD A DREAM WHEN I WAS ASLEEP EARLIER.

WILL YOU APPEAR IN FRONT OF ME, EVEN IF IT'S JUST A DREAM?

NARUMI, WHEN I'M BORED...

TO DESTROY AUTOMATONS...

...ON HER WAY WITH GUY, LUCILLE AND ME...

YES... THE PRINCESS WAS...

WAS I IN THAT DREAM?!

...THANK YOU!!

MY DEAR...

SHIROGANE...

THANK YOU...

IN THE DUTCH LANGUAGE OF THE MIDDLE AGE...

THE ETYMOLOGICAL MEANING OF THE WORD "MANNEQUIN" WAS... "HUMAN BEING".

PRINCESS.

HMM...

GUY, LUCILLE, TAKE CARE OF YOUR-SELVES ...

VRMVR

NARUMI, IT'S OVER. SHALL WE GO?

FLASH

SHUT UP!!

EVEN IF IT'S A SHIROGANE?

HA HA, HERE COME THE THOUGHTS OF A "MAN WITH A CHIGNON"!

HUH?! WHY ME?!

MAYBE MY LITTLE BABY WANNA FOLLOW THE PRINCESS?

ALMOST NOTHING...

JUST A LITTLE...

GHH

DON'T YOU HAVE HUMAN BLOOD?!

BY THE WAY, I GET IT NOW! YOU LET ELISE BE ABDUCTED IN ORDER TO LOCATE THE PLACE WHERE THEY WERE HIDING, DIDN'T YOU?

THAT WAS NOT WHAT I MEANT!!

YES, INDEED...

HE'S FINALLY GETTING ANGRY...

THE SOFT STONE IS WITH THE ONE WITH A GOOD SMILE.

VRROM

WELL, WHERE SHOULD WE HEAD TO NOW?

HEY! OH!

HEY, LISTEN TO ME!

THE PRINCESS OF THE AUTOMATONS

karakuri circus

ELISE, THIS IS NONE OF YOUR CONCERN!

YES, IT IS!!

NOW, DISMISS YOURSELF PLEASE!

COME BACK ANOTHER DAY!

FATHER, I'M ASKING YOU TOO.

NO, NO, AND NO! MISTER MINISTER!

WE HAVE NO BUDGET TO BUILD HOSPITALS!

BUT, HIGHNESS ...

BLA BLA

PEOPLE FROM THE WORKING CLASSES GAVE ME THE CLOTHES...

THAT I WAS WEARING THE OTHER DAY.

THAT'S WHY YOU MUST NOT NEGLECT THEIR HEALTH CARE!

FATHER, THE COUNTRY WOULDN'T EXIST WITHOUT ITS PEOPLE!

MOM ALWAYS SAID THAT A WOMAN MUST ALWAYS BE WARM.

THE FASHION MAY BE TO BE ALMOST NAKED, BUT YOU'LL CATCH A COLD!

ELISE, YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO HAVE CHILDREN!

A YOUNG WOMAN SHOULDN'T SHOW SO MUCH SKIN!

SHINING PROM-ENADES ...

AH...

HANDSOME MEN...

FOR NO REASON NOW...

MY EYES DON'T WANT TO SEE THEM...

karakuri circus

BLACKOUT